



Fireworks

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The American traditions of parades, cookouts, and fireworks help us celebrate the summer season, especially our nation's birthday on the Fourth of July. However, fireworks can turn a joyful celebration into a painful memory when children and adults are injured while incorrectly using fireworks. Although most fireworks can be relatively safe with proper and careful usage, some fireworks, such as illegal fireworks, present substantial risks that can result in deaths, blindings, amputations and severe burns.

The following are examples of injuries from legal and illegal fireworks:

An 8-year-old girl received second and third degree burns to her leg when a spark from a sparkler she was holding ignited her dress.

A 19-year-old male was holding a large firecracker that exploded when it was lit. The man lost the tips of his left index and middle fingers and broke his thumb. He has had many visits to the doctor and will have further surgeries for his injuries.

A 43-year-old male was struck in the eye when a bottle rocket went under his glasses and into his eye. After surgery for lacerations to the eyelid, the man reported that his vision is still blurry and he may require further operations.

To help prevent incidents like these, the federal government, under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, prohibits the sale of the most dangerous types of fireworks to consumers. These banned fireworks include large reloadable mortar shells, cherry bombs, aerial bombs, M-80 salutes and larger firecrackers containing more than two grains of powder. Also banned are mail-order kits designed to build these fireworks.

In a regulation that went into effect December 6, 1976, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission lowered the permissible charge in firecrackers to no more than 50 milligrams of powder. In addition, these amended regulations provide performance specifications for fireworks other than firecrackers intended for consumers use, including a requirement that fuses burn at least 3 seconds, but no longer than 9 seconds. All fireworks must carry a warning label describing necessary safety precautions and instructions for safe use.

The Commission has issued a performance requirement to reduce the risk of potentially dangerous tip-over of large multiple tube mine and shell devices. Tip-over of these devices has resulted in two fatalities. The new requirement went into effect on March 26, 1997.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that in 2000 about 11,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireworks. About 55 percent of the injuries were burns, and most of the injuries involved the hands, eyes, and head. About half of the victims were under 15 years of age.

Fireworks should be used only with extreme caution. Older children should be closely supervised, and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks.

Before using fireworks, make sure they are permitted in your state or local area. Many states and local governments prohibit or limit consumer fireworks, formerly known as class C fireworks, which are common fireworks and firecrackers sold for consumer use. Consumer fireworks include shells and mortars, multiple tube devices, Roman Candles, rockets, sparklers, firecrackers with no more than 50 milligrams of powder and novelty items such as snakes and airplanes.

The following is a summary of state regulations as of May 1, 2000.

I. STATES THAT ALLOW SOME OR ALL TYPES OF CONSUMER FIREWORKS

(formerly known as class C fireworks), **APPROVED BY ENFORCING AUTHORITY, OR AS SPECIFIED IN LAW** (33 states including the District of Columbia):

Alabama	Nebraska
Alaska	New Hampshire
Arkansas	New Mexico
California	North Carolina
Colorado	North Dakota
District of Columbia	Oklahoma
Florida	Oregon
Hawaii	South Carolina
Idaho	South Dakota
Indiana	Tennessee
Kansas	Texas
Kentucky	Utah
Louisiana	Virginia
Michigan	Washington
Mississippi	West Virginia
Missouri	Wisconsin
Montana	Wyoming

(The above states enforce the federal regulations and applicable state restrictions).

II. STATE HAVING NO FIREWORKS LAWS EXCEPT AT COUNTY LEVEL:

Nevada

(CPSC regulations are still applicable for this state)

III. STATES THAT ALLOW ONLY SPARKLERS AND/OR OTHER NOVELTIES (total of 7 states):

Connecticut	Illinois
Maryland	Ohio
Maine	Pennsylvania
Iowa	

IV. STATES THAT BAN ALL CONSUMER FIREWORKS (including those which are allowed by CPSC regulations) - (total of 9 states):

Arizona	New Jersey
Delaware	New York
Georgia	Rhode Island
Massachusetts	Vermont
Minnesota	

To help consumers use fireworks more safely, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission offers these recommendations:

-- Do not allow young children to play with fireworks under any circumstances. Sparklers, considered by many the ideal "safe" firework for the young, burn at very high temperatures and can easily ignite clothing. Children cannot understand the danger involved and cannot act appropriately in case of emergency.

-- Older children should only be permitted to use fireworks under close adult supervision. Do not allow any running or horseplay.

-- Light fireworks outdoors in a clear area away from houses, dry leaves or grass and flammable materials.

-- Keep a bucket of water nearby for emergencies and for pouring on fireworks that don't go off.

-- Do not try to relight or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Douse and soak them with water and throw them away.

-- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.

-- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially a glass or metal container.

-- Keep unused fireworks away from firing areas.

-- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place. Check instructions for special storage directions.

**PARENTS SHOULD SUPERVISE THE
ORDERING AND USE OF MAIL-
ORDER"MAKE YOUR OWN" FIREWORK
KITS.**

To report a dangerous product or a product related injury and for information on CPSC's fax-on-demand service, call CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270. Consumers can obtain releases and recall information at CPSC's web site at www.cpsc.gov. Consumers can report product hazards to info@cpsc.gov.

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